

Executive Summary

This annual report of the Washington State Cancer Registry is the third publication to include cancer incidence data covering the entire state. It represents the ongoing effort by the Department of Health, the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, the Blue Mountain Oncology Program, physicians, and tumor registrars throughout Washington.

Cancer is a heterogeneous group of diseases characterized by uncontrolled growth and spread of abnormal cells. The various forms of cancer were responsible for 9,797 deaths among Washington residents in 1994, comprising twenty-five percent of all deaths. In 1994, cancer (all sites combined) was the most common cause of death among adults ages 35 to 74 years and the second leading cause overall. With 25,015 cases of cancer diagnosed in the state in 1994, some form of cancer will likely strike one in three Washingtonians in their lifetime.

This report of the Washington State Cancer Registry (WSCR) summarizes information on new cases of cancer (incidence) and death due to cancer (mortality) for Washington state residents. The report provides information on cancer of all sites combined and the 24 cancer sites most frequently diagnosed in Washington residents. This information can be used at the state, county or regional level to identify the burden of morbidity and mortality associated with each type of cancer. This information, combined with information on cancer prevention, early detection, and treatment, is useful for program planning and policy development aimed at reducing the burden of cancer.

The five most common types of cancer reported among Washington residents during 1994 were breast, prostate, lung, colorectal, and melanoma.

- 1 4,221 new cases and 745 deaths from female breast cancer were reported in 1994. Breast cancer is the second most common cause of cancer mortality for women. Nationally, breast cancer incidence has been increasing approximately 1% per year for the past 50 years. (NCI, 1997) The best strategy for prevention of breast cancer mortality is early detection through screening.
- 2 3,408 new cases and 662 deaths from prostate cancer were reported in 1994. It is the second leading cause of cancer death among men. Increased detection through screening most likely contributes to recent increases in prostate cancer incidence. (NCI, 1997) Screening has yet to demonstrate clear benefit in reducing death from prostate cancer. (NCI, 1997)
- 3 3,386 new cases of lung cancer were reported. 2,829 Washingtonians died of lung cancer, making it the leading cause of cancer mortality. Reduction in smoking remains the major focus of efforts to prevent lung cancer.

- 4 2,670 new cases of and 1,007 deaths from colorectal cancer were reported in 1994. Nationally, the incidence of colorectal cancer is increasing while the mortality rate is decreasing. (NCI, 1997) Regular screening has been shown to reduce mortality. (NCI, 1997) Regular physical activity and a low fat, high fiber diet rich in fruits and vegetables may reduce the risk for colon and rectum cancer. (ACS, 1996; CDC, 1996)
- 5 1,275 new cases and 106 deaths from melanoma of the skin were reported in 1994. Nationally, the incidence of melanoma has been increasing for several decades. (NCI, 1997) Avoiding sunburn and routine examination of the skin are effective in reducing incidence and mortality from melanoma. (NCI, 1997)